

**Town of Westford  
Finance Committee Meeting  
Millennium School  
February 13, 2008**

Present: Dave Murray, Kelly Ross, Rose O'Donnell, Tom Price, Jeanne Drula, Al Herget, Alicia Corvino, Suzanne Marchand

Absent: Ingrid Nilsson, Michael Princi

7:30 PM Call to Order

Reserve Fund Transfer – Fire Department

Chief Rochon of the Fire Department requested \$18,000 for new self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA). The Fire Department received a Federal Grant for \$168,000 to pay for the remainder of the costs. The Town is expected to contribute ten percent of the cost of the SCBA's. Ross motioned to transfer \$18,000 from the Finance Committee reserve fund (01131600-579010) to the Fire Department capital account (01220408-580000) to purchase the SCBA's.

Marchand noted that rather than include the cost of the SCBA's in the capital request, they decided to ask the Finance Committee for the money ahead of time. Rochon said that he wanted the funding right away as to not jeopardize the grant. The Fire Department has one year to use the funds from the grant. The SCBA's will last for fifteen years before they will need to be replaced. Lieutenant Barrett of the Fire Department noted that this is the third grant this year received by the Fire Department to pay for capital and personnel. The Fire Department applies for grants once per year.

The motion was approved unanimously, 7-0.

Discussion – SAFER Grant for Additional Firefighters

Lieutenant Barrett explained the process for obtaining the SAFER Grant, which stands for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response. The request is to officially staff the Nabnasset Fire Station. A fire station needs a minimum of four firefighters per shift in order to be fully staffed. The additional eight firefighters will allow for an extra two firefighters for each of the four shifts. If the grant is accepted, the Fire Department will ask for permission to staff the additional firefighters at the Rogers station. The grant is for \$843,400 over five years, which is roughly 25% of the cost for the firefighters. If the grant is accepted, the firefighters must be retained for a minimum of five years. Once the grant is accepted, the Town has 90 days to hire the firefighters. Currently, the Fire Department has a hiring list of twelve people. An additional twenty firefighters will be put on the list before the hiring is commenced.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to accept the SAFER Grant on February 12, 2008. To fund the firefighters, the Town will need an override of roughly \$450,000 for Fiscal Year 2009. For an average household valued at \$467,844, the tax impact will be \$53.29 per year. O'Donnell suggested that the Town ask for a larger override to help fund the firefighters past five years. Ross suggested the Finance Committee meet with the Selectmen to talk about financing.

Corvino motioned to proceed with accepting the SAFER Grant. O'Donnell seconded the motion which was approved unanimously, 7-0.

### Minutes

A motion was made by Drula to approve the minutes of January 28, 2008. The motion was seconded by Corvino and approved unanimously, 7-0.

A motion was made by Price to approve payment in the amount of \$110.00 to Dan O'Donnell for drafting the minutes of the Finance Committee Meetings. The motion was seconded by Corvino and approved unanimously, 7-0.

### Discussion – Joint Chairs Meeting Update

Ross attended the Joint Chairs meeting the previous week and shared some key topics that were discussed. First, the Town Manager discussed his request for the town inventory project for capital. The Town needs to hire professional help to determine the value and useful life of all of the Town's equipment. Second, the Town Manager wanted to investigate a possible partnership with some of the technology companies along Littleton Road. The schools may be able to benefit from this partnership. Lastly, the Town Hall dilemma was discussed. Selectmen Rosinski and Sullivan have been asked to find a plan using existing town buildings to house the displaced Town Hall employees. The Town Manager has also sent out an RFP seeking proposals for purchasing, leasing, or leasing to purchase a building that will be a suitable replacement for Town Hall.

### Discussion – Budget

O'Donnell discussed her meeting with Police Chief McEnaney, Deputy Chief Walter Shea, and Town Manager Norman Khumalo. There are no new positions requested for the police department Fiscal Year 2009. However, due to retirements, there are currently six patrolmen positions not occupied. There was also a question as to why each officer was given an accreditation stipend each year. McEnaney said that police station needs to be accredited because it creates more knowledgeable officers. The result is less suits and grievances filed against the Town. The officers are held more accountable for their actions. The accreditation is also worked into the union contracts.

Corvino asked why the overall electricity budget for the Town has decreased. According to the utility analysis provided by the Finance Department, the electricity is level fund from Fiscal Year 2007 and an additional ten percent has been added to the Finance Committee reserve fund.

The \$35,000 in the Town Manager's budget for Travel and Conferences is for the entire town.

Ross asked whether the new hotel excise tax for the Hilton has been factored in the revenue for the Town. It has not been considered for Fiscal Year 2009.

Khumalo stated that there have been no new recommended positions in the Town. The Town is postponing the hiring on some existing positions as well.

The Finance Committee briefly discussed the Recreation Enterprise budget. It was said that the Finance Department will send out more information to clearly show the cost savings for Fiscal Year 2009.

### Adjourn

9:30 – O'Donnell motioned to adjourn. Herget seconded the motion which was approved unanimously, 7-0.

Reserve Fund Balance FY08: \$89,510.25

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Signed, Dave Murray  
Finance Committee Chairman

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Date